

Creating Quality Culture in Higher Education

- Background & Concept of Quality Culture
- Challenges & Success factors



Background & Concept of Quality Culture (1)

Quality Culture as key discourse in the Bologna Process/EHEA

- Presented as an ideal internal QA system, emphasizing Quality Improvement above Quality Control
- Implementation may require changes in attitude and behaviour within both leadership and staff of HE institutions
- Adopted in the EHEA as the leading concept for QA through all Bologna Communiqués and the European Standards & Guidelines of QA in higher education
- Clear parallel with the concept of Total Quality Management

Background & Concept of Quality Culture (2)

Central philosophical tenet: Quality is contextual

- An institution must develop quality measures that are congruent with its **internal environment**
- An institution must develop quality measures that are congruent with its **external environment**
- An institution must take into account the **time dimension**: e.g., “quality champions” might be useful at the beginning of the internal quality developments but not necessarily later

Background & Concept of Quality Culture (3)

Role of stakeholders

- Quality Culture as an organizing principle that **empowers all stakeholders** within higher education.
- It stresses the importance of a **grass-root development of quality** rather than a top-down approach
- **Students play a key role** in embedding quality through their regular evaluation of teaching & learning and their involvement in decision-making bodies.
- **External stakeholders** will contribute a different and useful perspective on the institution, serve as a “reality check” and enrich the debate.

Challenges

Within the institutional quality system, the concept of Quality Culture may raise questions on how to:

- **Create ownership** for Quality Culture by the people who live it (with an emphasis on teaching staff).
- Systematise standards and operations across an institution while taking into account the professional concentration of expertise at the grass roots.
- Develop a set of standards in line with the institutional mission, without stifling individual initiatives and departmental diversity.
- Encourage **meaningful participation** of students & external stakeholders (in particular regional and labour market)

Success factors

A successful approach to Quality Culture requires at least:

- Engagement of the whole community – including students and administrative staff who are often forgotten – in a process of reflection about missions and goals
- Develop a communication strategy that combines top-down, bottom up and horizontal communication channels, written documents and formal and informal meetings
- Identification and empowerment of “quality culture champions” to contribute to the development and implementation of a quality culture strategy

Success factors (2)

A successful approach to Quality Culture requires at least:

- Consideration of the issue of fears by developing a coherent staff support & development scheme
- Making improvements visible to students and other concrete signals that their feedback and participation are important
- Appropriate human capacity and financial resources